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11 May 1964

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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DAILY BRIEF

Czechoslovakia: A change of structure and power relationships in the Czechoslovak Government, probably designed to dilute the authority of the presidency, is in the offing.

A decision soon to be announced will expand the National Assembly's powers by providing "greater unity of the legislative and executive functions of the state," according to Prague radio on 8 May. In an early March hint of such a change, President Novotny said that the executive branch of government would ultimately be "assimilated" by the presidium of the National Assembly.

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[redacted] the creation of an executive council--with Novotny as one of its members--is being considered to replace the presidency. Presumably such a council could be blended with the presidium of the National Assembly, or replace it, thus in effect placing the executive branch of the government under the control of the legislature.

As a solution to the current power struggle in Prague, such changes would provide a means of easing Novotny out of the picture as chief executive, or at least weaken his authority if he is to be re-elected. Under the present system, the new National Assembly to be elected on 14 June should elect the next president.

The powers of the Slovak governmental body, the Slovak National Council, are also to be expanded--a change which would reflect a significant victory for Novotny's Slovak opponents.

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West Germany: [As a matter of urgency, Chancellor Erhard is asking the US, UK, and France to join the Federal Republic in a new approach to Moscow on German unification.]

[Erhard told Ambassador McGhee on 8 May that if Bonn's unification proposal, already before the Ambassadorial Group, were not put forward jointly by the four allies and Bonn were forced to propose it alone, he would face a serious political problem and would find it extremely difficult to control the small but powerful pro-French group in his party.]

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[Ambassador McGhee believes that an essentially procedural proposal on the German question, possibly suggesting creation of a US-UK-French-Soviet standing committee, might be well received in the Federal Republic.]

[Erhard reportedly has put aside the idea of going to the USSR now, but his party is considering a formal visit to Moscow this summer of an all-party delegation of Bundestag deputies.]

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DAILY BRIEF

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South Korea: President Pak Chong-hui's decision to form a new cabinet may temporarily quiet the political strife which has handicapped the South Korean Government.

The new prime minister, Chong Il-kwon, a former ambassador to the US and foreign minister in the outgoing cabinet, is a popular figure with both political and military support. Appointment of Chong.

could serve to mollify Kim's opponents within the ruling Democratic Republican Party (DRP) and help repair the party's disunity.

As chairman of the DRP, Kim apparently has played a prominent role in the selection of new cabinet members. However, the politically astute new prime minister, [redacted]

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A stronger cabinet under Chong should be more effective in meeting economic difficulties and in working toward a settlement with Japan.

*Laos: Premier Souvanna is expected to name replacements to three neutralist cabinet posts this week.

Souvanna recently indicated he would replace two neutralist cabinet members who have refused to return from abroad. He also said he would appoint a successor to Quinim Pholsena, the neutralist foreign minister assassinated last year.

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The formal announcement is expected later this week in the National Assembly, which convenes today in the capital. It will probably draw a strong protest from the Pathet Lao, who have insisted that any cabinet changes have tripartite approval.

However, the neutralist premier appears to have succeeded in postponing any sweeping reshuffle of the government dictated by the rightists.

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Souvanna has indicated that he will move cautiously, making additional changes only after negotiations among all factions. He plans to visit Khang Khay in the near future for more talks with Pathet Lao leader Souphanouvang.

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Syria: The reappointment of Salah al-Din al-Bitar as prime minister appears to be an effort by the Baathist military regime of Major General Amin al-Hafiz to counter public opposition to its extremist policies. Numerous elements in Syria have been alienated by Hafiz' doctrinaire socialism and harsh security measures and by Syria's growing estrangement from the rest of the Arab states. Bitar, a comparatively moderate Baathist, may be allowed to modify some of the regime's hard-line policies, but real power will probably remain in the hands of Hafiz and the military.

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